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DCI PRESS CONFERENCE - 26 January 1976

Opening - Mr. Colby

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for coming. I invited you to express my concern over two things. First the obvious bursting of the dam protecting many of our secret operations and activities to the exposure of the draft of the report of the House Select Committee on Intelligence. We provided large amounts of information to this Committee with the understanding that the secrets therein would be protected and that if a difference between us arose as to whether they should be disclosed the President would be consulted and his decision would be final in the absence of further judicial determination.. The Committee complied with this arrangement as recently as two weeks ago, but now apparently asserts by some unknown logic that continued compliance is not required with respect to the final report. The Committee seems neither able to keep secrets nor its agreements. Second from the draft from the Committee that I've seen and the news stories today about it, I believe it totally biased and a dis-service to our nation, giving a thoroughly wrong impression of American intelligence. By selected use of the evidence provided, by innuendo and suggestive language the Committee implies that intelligence has deceptive budgets, has no accountability, and has not complied with one direct order of the President.

I deny these flatly. As to performance, I reiterate that America has the best intelligence in the world and that the Committee's selective application and quotation of our own efforts to improve ourselves are an outrageous calumny against the dedicated collectors, the imaginative engineers and scientists and the thoughtful analysts who comprise American intelligence. In short this report should not be issued and should not have been leaked, and I agree with the Chairman of the Committee on two things: one, that the best way to stop this leakage and the dangers to the United States that it involves is by a rapid dissolution of the Committee. And second ^{be} that the Committee's recommendation that stiff sanctions/imposed against Government employees, including members of Congress, for leaking secret information. Further I reiterate that the solution to this year of investigations and sensation lies in the better guidelines that we have adopted in intelligence and recommended elsewhere. The better supervision that responsible, constitutional oversight could provide and the better secrecy which is essential to the protection of intelligence and of our nation in the world in which we are living in the years ahead. Thank you very much and I'd be glad to answer questions.

Q: Mr. Colby, you suggest that it was Congress that leaked this thing to the New York Times and yet members of the Committee ^{they believe} indicate that/it was more likely the Executive Branch that did.

A: I don't know who did--I have no idea, I know that I didn't.

Q: Mr. Colby, have you asked for an investigation to see how it was leaked. . by some other Agency?

A: No I have not. It has just obviously come to our attention right away and I'm not going to go outside the confines of this Agency to investigate the leaks.

Q: Could you tell us what you know about Senator Jackson and his help to the Agency on how to handle material given to Congress.

A: I think that what Senator Jackson did was perfectly appropriate. He was a member of our oversight Committee--the Chairman of the oversight Committee had been shot and was in the hospital--another Committee of the Congress asked to get into some of our operational activities. The tradition of the Congress had been that those operational activities would only be discussed with our oversight Committees. The Agency asked Senator Jackson just how he thought this should be handled and he suggested that in the absence of the Chairman of the Armed Services/^{Oversight} Committee that we go to the Chairman of the Appropriations Oversight Committee, and that's the extent of it.

Q: Mr. Colby, the Senate Committee released a report that you asked them not to release in the form it was released in. . .has there been damage from the release of that report or do you only condemn the House Committee?

A: I believe there has been substantial damage to our country from the release of that long assassination report. I think that the details of that will be mined for years to come by groups hostile to this country. As you know I had a discussion

with that Committee just before it was leaked urging that the last names be excluded from it. They were not--nothing has happened to those individuals yet, but I am concerned at the inclusion of either names or data which can easily be used to deduce names, and those are present in the draft of this Committee's report that I have seen. The Committee did comply with our request to take out a number of names, but there are still clear identities there of people who could be murdered who dealt with us on a confidential basis in various countries in the world.

Q: Has the CIA's ability to help the two sides we most support in Angola been damaged by what was done by Congress?

A: Well I think that the fact that Congress has withheld any further assistance to Angola through the Senate vote today and which is coming up for the House vote tomorrow obviously is designed to limit the degree of assistance America can provide to some people who are fighting the representatives and clients of the Soviet Union.

Q: It was designed to do that, but did it have that effect?

A: It has certainly had the effect of barring/^{any}additional aid if the law _____.

Q: Sir, do you feel that the Congress should not have a voice in that.

A: I think the Congress has every right to a voice, but any of this activity other than intelligence gathering is under the law required to be reported to six Committees of Congress. I so did many months ago, and while individuals indicated some

dissent from this, the Congress as a whole or the Committees as a whole, through no formal way and no formal vote or any other indication indicated that they were so opposed to it that it should be stopped until it was leaked, and became the subject of a great deal of sensation here a month or so ago.

Q: Mr. Colby, how can members of Congress who are not members of one of these six Committees express their view on operations they know nothing about?

A: There are lots of ways that a member of Congress can express his views. He can express a general policy about an area of the world, or about a particular kind of operation and can see whether the fellow members of the Congress join him. Two years ago the Congress turned down by a three-to-one vote a suggestion that CIA should conduct no operation other than intelligence gathering abroad, i.e., no political or para-military operations. Therefore, the Congress indicated that they should be continued and we have continued them. There are ways in which individual Congressmen can approach the Chairman of the oversight Committee about certain situations and that has been done in the past. There are obviously ways in which the members of the oversight Committee can express their views, either individually or by securing a Committee vote, by appealing ^{to} the the leadership, by visiting upon the President--there are lots of ways in which a member of Congress can express himself.

Q: Mr. Pike--I mean, I'm sorry, Mr. Colby, Mr. Pike has said in the past--not today--that if the Administration is not leaking these secrets the Administration is certainly pouncing

on the leaks in an effort to cut off Congress' access to information in the future by saying that it can't be trusted. Is it possible that you're protesting too much so you are trying to take advantage of this to cut off Congress in the future?

A: Absolutely not. I have urged and recommended stronger Congressional oversight. I am prepared to live with that and I'm sure my successor will. The problem is whether that oversight can be responsible and protect the secrets involved and I don't think there's any inconsistency between a strong oversight by a representative Committee of the Congress and providing the members of that Committee full information about what we're doing.

Q: Mr. Colby, you said that the Agency's budget has been forthright or has not been deceptive, and yet in the case of Angola, the value of 45 caliber automatics there were perfectly serviceable and would cost the average person \$40 or \$50 was listed as \$5.00. Is that not dishonest and deceptive?

A: I think --I'm glad you mentioned that--because that's an example of taking one little fact and trying to create a general climate of distrust. That particular instance comes from the fact that CIA applied the dollar value of any equipment that it passes away as the dollar value that it receives it from the Department of Defense. According to the Foreign Assistance Act, if there are certain things which are surplus they are valued at 1/3 their value. This we did with a very small quantity of some of our para-military effects. The

change on the total sum involved would have amounted to about one or two million dollars and the idea that the whole sum involved would have been doubled is nonsense.

Q: Mr. Colby, under the sources and methods provision of the charter, have you or has it been proposed that you investigate the sources of these leaks or that any other agency investigate the sources of these leaks.

A: Not yet. We have been trying to deal with the leaks as they go along. We are clearly in the situation of trying to protect ourselves to the extent we can through indoctrination, through our own secrecy agreements and through recommendations for improvement in the laws. Any investigation of a possible violation of law would be done by the proper law enforcement agencies--not by CIA. Any investigation by CIA would be of our own employees to see whether there is a leak here--some inpropriety in their behaviors.

Q: Mr. Colby, you don't think this would be appropriate under the sources and methods provision of the charter?

A: No I do not. I've referred to that as a gray area in the past which was the subject of some misunderstanding and I think it is very clear that my authority is limited to the administrative control of this Agency.

Q: Mr. Colby, what communication have you had with the President about the latest developments--the latest leaks--or with staff members at the White House?

A: We've discussed at various times various problems on this whole subject of how we're doing our business--we're in constant

communication with the White House, naturally.

Q: Has the White House explained the exact course it's going to take to try to stop House intelligence. . .

A: No, we've discussed this and we are discussing recommendations for an improvement of our secrecy legislation.

Q: Mr. Colby, the House Intelligence Committee recommends that the Defense Intelligence Agency be disbanded and the NSA be taken away from the Department of Defense. Do you agree with those recommendations?

A: I haven't seen those recommendations and without really knowing more of the detail I think it better that I not comment too rapidly on them. I think I have worked well with the Defense Intelligence Agency, I think they do a useful service in the Department of Defense. I don't know the specifics to the recommendation. I'd have to look at them to find out.

Q: How will this "bursting of the dam" as you call it affect your appearance and your performance in front of this Committee? You want this Committee dissolved--are you going to continue to cooperate with them at all?

A: Well I think that this Committee is in the course of its final days and I don't think there's much need for any further _____ of secret information to them. We are discussing the content of their final resolution on the report. We have taken the position that this report should not be issued in its present form. We also worked with them to secure the elimination of the most dangerous aspects, but we still take the position that large portions of this report which will hurt our foreign

policy and will very substantially injure our ability to conduct covert operations and intelligence gathering in the future.

Q: Mr. Colby, can you be more specific on just what kind of _____ of security is done by the _____.

A: I think the best way is to point to various foreigners who have indicated that they just plain don't dare to work with us anymore, because we are giving an impression that our country is totally unable to keep a secret in the intelligence business.

Q: Have they done that in recent days?

A: They have done it in the past month or so--a number of them have indicated this?

Q: Have they done it since the leaks about _____?

A: Well, they hadn't done it since yesterday afternoon that I know of, but I would have to find out what _____ this morning said.

Q: How about since last Monday?

A: Well I can't name any particular one, but I had a report a couple of days ago which summed up, over the past month or so, the impression abroad, and it came to the very clear conclusion that there has been a marked erosion of confidence in the last month, but up to that time we had been giving the impression that we were going through this investigation but that we were going to protect some of the most critical aspects of our intelligence business. The last month has very substantially eroded that confidence among our foreign friends.

Q: Mr. Colby, is any purpose served in keeping secrets from Americans information that is well known to hostile foreign intelligence services?

A: I think what we're talking about here is the degree to which you spread information which can be used by terrorists, by paranoids, by others. The fact that the KGB knows something does not necessarily mean that some wild man in some strange country knows it, and he is the one that we are concerned about just as well as the KGB.

Q: (Totally unintelligible!

A: Well, I have recommended last Friday we discussed with the Senate Human Operations Committee a formation of an oversight committee ^{which would} ~~that will~~ have full authority to oversee and get into the details of our business, but it would be limited in number, it would have strict controls over the discipline of its staff, and the members would take full responsibility for maintaining the secrets that were given to them. I also believe that we need legislation to improve our ability to exert discipline over the members of the Executive Branch who will receive access to intelligence and over retirees after they leave the intelligence business. . .including me.

Q: Mr. Colby, will your association with the Government, the Administration, end with Mr. Bush's swearing in or do you plan to stay and continue to work with the President on recommendations he prepares for Congress.

A: No I think when Mr. Bush takes over, then I will become a private citizen. My link with intelligence will consist of two

things-- my secrecy agreement and I hope my pension.

(I thought you're going to write a book too.)

Q: On the matter of the aid to Turkish rebels in Iraq, that is something I understand from the stories the President decided on against the CIA's wishes, and was stopped again without consulting or getting approval of the CIA. Now, isn't that something Congress should be talking about, discussing ways of bringing intelligence business, covert operations, under greater control of not only the President but of CIA?

A: Well, without confirming any particular covert action which is what I'm concerned about in these reports, the fact is that CIA is a part of the Executive Branch and the fact that a general doesn't agree with an order that's given to him doesn't relieve him of the obligation to carry it out. And the fact that an Ambassador doesn't agree with a policy he's asked to inform a foreign office about doesn't relieve him of the obligation of going ahead and informing them. There are limits of course in the limits that are set out in the law and our basic American morality, but when CIA is directed by the President to do something which is quite proper within its charter, then I think CIA has the job of carrying it out and I might say that I think CIA ^{does} ~~has~~ a very good job of just that.

Q: Mr. Colby, you were reported to have met with President Ford on Sunday, first was that the case and second what did you ask him?

A: That's not the case.

Q: That's not the case?

A: No

Q: Mr. Colby, if left to you, what would you do about the Congressmen _____?

A: Well I don't think it ought to be left to me. I think it ought to be left to his colleagues in the Congress. The Constitution says that the Houses of the judges of their members and I think I believe the responsible majority of the House and the responsible majority of the Senate will structure themselves to exert the necessary discipline over their members in order to keep the secrets and continue a responsible oversight of intelligence.

Q: Mr. Colby, you said in the past that various American companies, especially some working overseas, have often cooperated with the CIA out of patriotic duty the Officers of the Corporation felt. Does that include any news organizations and any individual journalists and does it continue today?

A: What I'd like to say about that is what I've said many times before, that we have structured ourselves so that we do not have any operational relationship with the staff members of any general circulation American media. I think that the odd stringer, the free lancer, that is another question that the editor and managers of the news services deal with them as independent contractors, they sell their copy and their activity to whoever will buy it, and I think that we can be one of those people who also benefit from their activity without in any way injuring their relationship with the American press. We do have specific directives that no action will be taken by CIA in any way to manage what they report to an American journal.

Q: Do you believe, Mr. Colby, that a free lancer who is dealing under CIA on an operational basis should let his about the media know that he has a relationship with CIA.

A: I don't see that it's necessary at all. He's a free agent and he deals with various journals, various other customers and the fact that I don't think he's obliged to report to anybody exactly who he deals with.

Q: Did the Agency influence the Reuter's News Report?

A: The Agency has no manipulation or exploitation of the Reut. That was another example of taking a side reference and making a major statement of it. I think the Committee referred to some manipulation of Reuter's. This was a purely hypothetical example put up when we were discussing the difference between American news media and foreign news media, and someone else used the example Reuter's, the conversation went around on the subject of Reuter's. We have no manipulation and no management of Reuter's news.

Q: Mr. Colby a little earlier you spoke of basic American morality, tell me where in that morality does it say for the CIA to act apparently as a mediary for _____ female companionship to foreign heads of state?

A: I'm talking about today and for the future. I'm not going to go into the misdeeds or missteps of 28 years. I think the fact is we have made some mistakes. I've admitted that many times, but to use those to characterize the Agency I think is totally wrong.

Q: Is Hairy Days the only such movie the Agency ever made?

A: We've made various movies--what movies we made I can't tell you right now.

Q: Has the Agency ever made pornographic movies except Hairy Days, of course.

A: I don't know of any others.

(Mr. Colby) Well, thank you very much.

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Assistant to the Director
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Att: DCI Press Conference Transcript - 26 Jan
1976

Angus:

Would you have one of your people take a quick look at this in terms of straightening out some of the comments in the Question and Answer period. (I'd like to have it back tonight so I can have it retyped and get it over to P&PD for reproduction as soon as possible.

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EO-DDA nh (27 Jan 76)

DDI 7E-44 Hqs.

Att: Press Conference Transcript, 26 Jan 76

The attached was transcribed from the tape last night. Obviously some words were unintelligible. Hope this serves your purpose.


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